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The EI Edge

Emotional Intelligence for High Performers

A practical introduction to the four core EI competencies

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Why this matters

Research consistently shows that Emotional Intelligence (EI) accounts for up to 58% of performance across all job types. In a landmark study published in the Harvard Business Review, Daniel Goleman demonstrated that EI is twice as important as IQ and technical skill for outstanding leadership. This guide introduces the four domains of EI and why each one matters for your leadership, your team, and your results.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity to recognise, understand, manage, and use emotions effectively — in yourself and in others. It is not about being emotional. It is not about being "soft." It is one of the most rigorously researched determinants of leadership effectiveness, team performance, and organisational culture.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman, drawing on decades of research with global organisations, developed the most widely used model of EI in leadership and performance contexts. In its current form, the model has four core domains and twelve competencies nested within them.

This guide covers the four domains. For each one, you'll get a clear explanation, a sense of what high and low EI looks like in practice, and one reflection question to take into your week.

The Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Domain 1: Self-Awareness

"Knowing what you're feeling and why."

What this looks like in practice:

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately perceive your own emotions in the moment and understand how they affect your thoughts, decisions, and behaviour. It includes recognising your own strengths and limitations, and having the confidence that comes from an honest self-assessment, not blind positivity.

High vs Low:

High: You notice when your emotional state is influencing your decisions. You can name what you're feeling with nuance. You seek feedback and don't find it threatening. Low: You're often blindsided by your own reactions. You struggle to understand why you made a decision after the fact. Feedback feels personal and uncomfortable.

Your Reflection Question:

"In the last week, when did your emotional state affect a decision or interaction in a way you only noticed afterwards? What would earlier awareness have changed?"

Domain 2: Self-Management

"Keeping your emotions working for you, not against you."

What this looks like in practice:

Self-management is not suppression. It is the ability to regulate your emotional responses effectively, staying composed under pressure, adapting to change, managing impulses, and maintaining a sense of drive even when things are difficult. It includes the ability to keep long-term goals in focus when short-term emotions are pulling in a different direction.

High vs Low:

High: You can stay calm in a crisis. You recover from setbacks without ruminating. You follow through on commitments even when motivation dips. Low: You react impulsively under stress. You find it hard to recover from criticism. Your mood significantly affects those around you without you intending it to.

Your Reflection Question:

"Where in your work or leadership do you find it hardest to manage your emotional response? What does it cost you and your team when that happens?"

Domain 3: Social Awareness

"Reading the room — and the people in it."

What this looks like in practice:

Social awareness is the ability to accurately perceive the emotions of others, understand the dynamics of groups and organisations, and recognise what people need, even when they don't say it directly. At its core, it is empathy in action. It is what allows leaders to connect with their teams in a way that builds genuine trust rather than compliance.

High vs Low:

High: You pick up on shifts in team morale before they become problems. You listen to understand, not just to respond. You notice when someone is struggling even if they're performing. Low: You miss the emotional signals in conversations. You can be perceived as disconnected or dismissive without intending to be. Team issues often catch you off guard.

Your Reflection Question:

"Think of a recent team interaction. What were the emotional undercurrents you noticed — or missed? What might a more socially aware response have looked like?"

Domain 4: Relationship Management

"Using emotional awareness to lead, influence, and inspire."

What this looks like in practice:

Relationship management is where the other three domains come together in action. It is the ability to use your self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness to communicate effectively, navigate conflict, inspire others, influence positively, and build teams that genuinely work. It is the visible output of emotional intelligence in leadership.

High vs Low:

High: You give feedback that lands without damage. You navigate conflict without it becoming personal. People feel seen and motivated after working with you. Low: You avoid difficult conversations. Your feedback creates defensiveness. Conflict either escalates or gets suppressed rather than resolved.

Your Reflection Question:

"Where in your leadership is relationship management your biggest opportunity? What is one conversation you have been avoiding that, if handled with emotional intelligence, could change something important?"

Your EI Self-Assessment

Rate yourself honestly on each domain from 1 (this is a real stretch for me) to 5 (this feels like a genuine strength). Identify if this is a High/Medium/Low priority for you. Remember, there are no wrong answers, only useful ones.

Domain	My Score (1-5)	My Priority (H/M/L)
Self-Awareness		
Self-Management		
Social Awareness		
Relationship Management		

What Your Scores Are Telling You

Where you scored lowest is your biggest development opportunity — not your biggest weakness. EI is learnable at any stage of a career or life. The leaders and individuals who invest in developing emotional intelligence consistently outperform those who don't, regardless of technical skill or IQ.

Where you scored highest is your foundation. The question is whether you are deliberately using those strengths, or whether they're operating by default without you fully leveraging them.

The next step

If you're ready to develop your emotional intelligence — as a leader, a manager, or an individual who wants to lead themselves better — I offer bespoke workshops, leadership development, team programmes and 1:1 support built around emotional intelligence, confidence and behavioural change. Book a discovery call at rsgsuccess.co.uk or email info@rsgsuccess.co.uk.

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